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MARCVS AVRELIVS.

"I seek the Truth, by which no man
was ever injured."

7917.m

MARCVS AVRELIVS: A TRAGEDY BY . . DOVGLAS J. BOYLE, ILLVSTRATED BY VIOLET DINSDALE. . . .

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NOTE TO "MARCUS AURELIUS."

Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, Emperor of the Romans in the Second Century A.D., was one of the best monarchs that ever sat on a throne,—enlightened, just, anxious ever to do his duty to the Gods and to the State.

He reigned in a time of great tribulation in the Empire, for not only were the barbarians attacking it on every hand, but the more terrible foes of Pestilence and Famine were destroying their thousands and ten thousands in the State, throwing out of gear all the administrative machinery, and increasing the cares of Office.

At such a time the integrity of Marcus Aurelius did much to relieve the pressure on the people; he held together this sorely tried Empire as long as he lived.

In a reign full of fighting, he yet found time to cultivate Philosophy; his influence was for good; he cared for his people, and was loved of them. His sweet counsel disarmed even Envy and Hatred; his was the sane mind that kept whole a breaking Empire.

The domestic life of this majestic Cæsar was most unhappy.

His wife, Faustina, was false; she had many lovers.

Cæsar was patient, his conduct showed the greatness of his love,—he was beyond the understanding of this woman of passions.

The murder of her lover, Avidius Cassius, by his own soldiers, was the death of Faustina. Then, Marcus, turning once again to fight the northern barbarians, struggled on for yet a little while,—dying, worn out with cares and anxiety at Vienna in 180 A.D.

Such is the material of this play.

It is the penalty of Adam to be misunderstood; the nature of Humanity to be fallible; we cannot know all the factors which influence the conduct of our neighbours.

The greatest tragedies of life come not from the scheming of villains, but from our own imperfections, from the terribly effective labours of sincere men who do not share the views of their fellows.

By some patent weakness in themselves, by their very calmness or coldness, by their inability to see and value aright the small things close at hand, such men unwittingly cause unhappiness, suffer many disappointments, and by very reason

of their own efficiency, seem unable to remedy their lot.

Fate and our own weakness triumph in the end, however we struggle, however we boast, however we hope and love.

Such is the despondent view, the view of the manly heathen; it is Life,—let us scorn Fate,—lose grandly.

" I would I had his faith, I need it now!"

Who knows but that this enemy of the Christians, Marcus Aurelius, was nearer to God than many of those who looked upon him as the Anti-Christ?

Practising virtue, believing in God, not far from heaven, yet was he unsatisfied with the credentials of a mortal Christ, and denied the Comforter,—the Spirit of Truth he sought,—he took refuge in Philosophy,—and who shall say that Christ is not there too? If we take the wings of the morning, and fly into the uttermost parts of the sea,—is he not there also,—the Spirit of Truth and Love?

*At the very moment when it seemed that Marcus and his wife were to reach a better understanding, Fate steps in, preventing.

The calm assembly of a mighty army to win back his friend Cassius, not by force,—but by a demonstration of the power he intended not to

use, so startles the followers of Cassius that they murder him,—and send his head to Marcus,—hoping, thereby, to win favour from this ruler who seemed so like the gods.

Faustina sees the head, believes that she is mocked, and lays a curse upon Marcus;—henceforth, no hope for her.

Marcus knows not the awful import of Cassius' death until he again sees the head of Cassius,—this time a bust, in Faustina's apartment, and sees the love written in the face of his dying wife.

This coincidence, this repetition of the terrible scene when Cassius, held by the hair in the hand of an African Slave, smeared with blood, beaten for ever, returned once more to Faustina, brings home to Marcus as nothing had yet done, the meaning of his friend's overthrow, and of Faustina's love.

Cassius, defeated,—that poor head calm in death, disfigured with blood and dirt, silently dripping with great slow drops, had become the smiling Cassius of the bust—the Cassius of old, the gallant soldier,—a Victor now, the lover of Faustina still triumphant.

CHARACTERS.

MARCUS AURELIUS	...	Emperor of the Romans.
PROTINUS ...	...	His Friend.
CONSTANTIUS	...	A Counsellor.
DEMETRIUS ...	...	A Greek Philosopher.
AVIDIUS CASSIUS	...	A Roman General, beloved of Faustina.

Centurions, Messengers, Ambassador of the Quadi, Slaves, etc.

FAUSTINA ... The wife of MARCUS AURELIUS.

Attendants, Slave-girls, etc.

TIME : About 175 A.D.

SCENES.

Act I. Rome: The Palace of the Emperor.

Act II. South Bohemia: The Country of the Quadi.

Act III. Rome: The Royal Tent at the Triumphal Games.

Act IV. Asia: A Byzantine Palace.

ACT I.

ACT. I.

Rome: A Council Chamber in the Palace. Enter CONSTANTIUS, PROTINUS, and DEMETRIUS.

DEMETRIUS:

By the gods! A Household strange past reckoning!
Who would have thought this noble Emperor
Could father such a son!

CONSTANTIUS:

You are a stranger,
And therefore your fresh mind of Marcus' Court
Must needs take sharp impress; but we, inured,
Staled with all-deadening Custom, notice not,—
Or notice not so keenly.

DEMETRIUS:

Worse for you;
It is a shame;—nay,—I must guard my tongue;
I almost had forgot.

CONSTANTIUS:

Sir,—do not fear,

Our minds, from yours, even as from a painting,
Have caught anew the tone of this grave Court,
Whereby we feel the strangeness of the truth.
What oddness passed our notice, though seen oft
Now sharply stands before us; speak your mind,
It profits much to see with strangers' eyes.

PROTINUS:

Be not afraid, Demetrius, speak it out.
Were Cæsar here, attending on your speech,
Though it were full of sourest foul abuse,
Yet would he take delight to question you,
And try to move your spirit.

CONSTANTIUS:

That is true.
Cæsar is just; he is magnanimous;
He would not hurt a fly, much less a man.
Unless, perchance, it had turned Christian,
Blaspheming all our gods. Come, speak your mind.

DEMETRIUS:

Thus it is:—I cannot understand it:—
When such a man can bear with such a wife,
Breed such a son, and yet forbear to slay him,
I cannot but suspect he is a sham,
A hypocrite,—or worse.

CONSTANTIUS:

H'm! Shrewd, and true.
Upon my word! It *is* a strange condition;
But mark you, Sir,—granted the Court is dull,

Run like a miser's office, or the home
Of some poor private gentleman, yet,—mark,—
He is a gifted man.

PROTINUS :

A King of Kings!
I would the gods had made him less a god,
And more a sinful man, for though I think,
In him, this mode of life, this love of wisdom,
Is genuine enough, yet in the Court,
Aping him, there is a plague of humbugs,
Making all seem foolish. This, the son,
Commodus, duly noting, straight runs wild,
Makes boast of ignorance, and like a fool,
Takes to his bosom all the patriots,
The Dandies of the Way, the rabbit-mouths,
And stultifies his breeding.

DEMETRIUS :

So? Indeed!

PROTINUS :

Wastes his time, the glory of his manhood,
That spirit which one day must rule the World,
In wine, and lust of women!

CONSTANTIUS :

Yet, they say,
They oft do best who sow the most wild oats;
Excess of Virtue runs to headlong Vice,—
Until dried up by Age.

PROTINUS :

A pleasant rede,—

To comfort fools and boys; what's sown is
reaped;
It pleases some to think, one glorious day,
They'll throw aside their shame and youthful folly,
Stand in the World's esteem, and shine the more
For all their vicious courses; yet, I think,
They reck not of the gods, nor Charbydis,
But steer foolhardily.

CONSTANTIUS:

A fault of Youth,
But Sir, he will repent.

PROTINUS:

He *will* repent!
Doubt not,—he *will* repent!

CONSTANTIUS:

Then, let us hope,
He'll shed a glory on the Roman State,
To match his father's Fame.

DEMETRIUS:

But Sirs,—Faustina,
From what I see, he loves her, tenderly.
If Beauty counts for ought, she's worth his love,
Ev'n as he's worth her's; but what do we see?
She treats him like a fool; acts wantonly,
Proves herself all unworthy of the Throne,
And galls a generous—sst!

Fanfare of Trumpets.

Enter Legionaries,—MARCUS AURELIUS,
FAUSTINA, AVIDIUS CASSIUS.

Gentlemen and Attendants.

Most of the men simply and richly dressed, like the Emperor, who is a dignified, intellectual looking man, though not too robust.

FAUSTINA is a full-blooded beauty, blazing with jewels and finery,—very beautiful. She is obviously much interested in AVIDIUS CASSIUS,—and disgusted with the Emperor.

AVIDIUS CASSIUS is a handsome, aristocratic-looking General, evidently a man of strong passions, and although obviously full of adoration for FAUSTINA, he is also very respectful to the Emperor,—who treats him as his friend, pleased to have this tribute to the power of his wife.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

What do my worthy Counsellors thus early?
Discussing things of State?

PROTINUS :

Not so, my lord,
I fear we pass but scandal,—foolish words,
Unworthy of your notice.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

This is new.
You slander your own selves; you never spoke
More foolish words than those.

PROTINUS :

How is my lord?

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Oh! better,—well—but come,—Affairs of State.

CONSTANTIUS :

If I might speak a word your Majesty,
I'd counsel you to take your duties gently.
Release yourself from this incessant toil,
Ease now the aching vessels of your mind
By yielding power to others.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Would I could!
Right gladly would I yield it to the Man,—
It crushes me apace,—but *this* is weak,—
Here is my lot, and men should not complain.
On him that rules a State lies heavy trust,
And he must work for it.

CONSTANTIUS :

I grant it, Sir,—
But to bear Care, and heavy labours too,
And all the hazards of a soldier's life,
Is more than Man can carry. Share your work,—
Generals you have,—and Counsellors,—
Commit to them the Wars, the care of Plagues,
The staving off of Famines, fear and death,
And hold the reins on all.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

A useful plan.
It is a poltroon's part to question Nature.
And yet, I think, she formed me not for rule

Enter Messenger, hastily.

MESSENGER :

Noble Emperor, forgive my haste,
I bear ill news and heavy. Sir, the foe,
The Marcomanni, and their kindred tribes
Have swarmed into the Realm, and like a Sea,
Have borne away the Legions. They like froth,
Blown on the surging flood,—cling here and there,
Helpless, isolated.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Heavy news;—
And we have no more soldiers!

AVIDIUS CASSIUS :

Yes,—the East?
Withdraw some from the East.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

That were not safe.

AVIDIUS CASSIUS :

How else shall they be met, Sir?

MARCUS AURELIUS :

By ourselves.
Constantius, quick! Enlist the slaves, the boys,
The gladiators, every able man within the City,
I myself will lead them.

Exit CONSTANTIUS.

Call the Senate.
Summon them at once into the Forum.

Exit Gentleman.

AVIDIUS CASSIUS:

But Caesar,—what can such men do?

MARCUS AURELIUS:

Fight.

AVIDIUS CASSIUS:

Fight? Boys, and slaves?

MARCUS AURELIUS:

As Romans, and as Men.

AVIDIUS CASSIUS:

And if they fight, what skill have they?
What strength, and what endurance?

MARCUS AURELIUS:

Only spirit,
The god that is within them, let me think it.
I'll not despise the common mind of man.
They that have souls and bodies like to us;
That draw life-giving air, and see the sun;
That labour at their tasks with patient care;
That do their duty, stinted praise or fame,
Are not of us unworthy. Cassius,
We boast of rank and breeding,—good, but then,
We should remember this,—we all are parts,
Parts of one another and this Cosmos;
We live to serve each other, and we all
Are brothers in the State. Despise them not.
I'll trust my countrymen.

AVIDIUS CASSIUS:

Your pardon, Sir,

MARCUS AURELIUS :

It is enough.

AVIDIUS CASSIUS :

What of the East, my lord?

MARCUS AURELIUS :

You shall rule the East. Speed quickly there,—
Gather me forces; send them tide by tide.
I trust you, Cassius. Protinus,—hence,—
I'll see you now about the baggage-trains.
Faustina,—fare you well.

FAUSTINA :

Farewell, my lord.

Exit MARCUS AURELIUS, PROTINUS, and Gentlemen.

Retire,—I'd speak with Cassius.

Women retire. Empress and CASSIUS much moved by emotion at parting.

Cassius,—fare you well.

AVIDIUS CASSIUS :

Empress, farewell.

FAUSTINA :

Until a better day.
How like you this adventure?

AVIDIUS CASSIUS :

Ill, my Queen.
Mark my words,—this Army will be swamped,
And Marcus too.

FAUSTINA:

And then, my lord?

AVIDIUS CASSIUS:

And then?

FAUSTINA:

Aye, then my noble Cassius.

AVIDIUS CASSIUS:

You will reign,

Commodus is,—unstable.

FAUSTINA:

Tactful, Sir;

Would you not seize the power?

AVIDIUS CASSIUS:

It would be yours.

FAUSTINA:

Not mine, not mine, dear Cassius, it indeed,

My wishes be my fortune.

AVIDIUS CASSIUS:

What do you mean?

You were a prize worth taking.

FAUSTINA:

And why not?

AVIDIUS CASSIUS:

Ye gods! You mean?

FAUSTINA:

I mean the World is yours.

The East, its Armies, Rome, the Throne,—and—

Cassius!

AVIDIUS CASSIUS :

Faustina ! Then,—my mate?

FAUSTINA :

Your wife, dear Cassius.
And longing so to be.

AVIDIUS CASSIUS :

But what of him?
Marcus, what of him?

FAUSTINA :

He is a fool.
I hate him.

AVIDIUS CASSIUS :

Can it be !

FAUSTINA :

But half a man,—
Dull of the mind, morose, conceited, vain,
Narrow, weak, effeminate, wordy,—Dull.
Would Cassius held his place !

AVIDIUS CASSIUS :

And such is Fame !
A Man hailed by the People as a god;
The fair Ideal of the Human Race;
The sweet Philosopher; the Soul of Rome;
The Soldier, and the Man—and—dull ! What next !

FAUSTINA :

O cease !
They take him for a god who's but a man

Of passions like themselves,—oh! stuffed with straw!
I've seen him faint but at the sight of blood
Spilled in the Roman Games,—is this a Man?
A Soldier, worth the name?

AVIDIUS CASSIUS:

I know him well,—
You do misprize your husband past all credit.

FAUSTINA:

Cassius, listen,—by your own conceit,
Which takes my dreary Emperor for a god,
Judge my esteem of you. You are a King,—
And he,—a base-born slave.

AVIDIUS CASSIUS:

You flatter me.
Did I subscribe to this, I'd write myself
A fool—as one conceited, yet my Empress,
For your esteem I'm proud. Should Marcus fall,
I'll hasten back to Rome with ships and men,
Holding the State,—for you.

FAUSTINA:

If Marcus fall?
He *must* fall, understand?

AVIDIUS CASSIUS:

Rebellion!

FAUSTINA:

Now take your Crown, dear Cassius. Think of me.

The gods have willed your chance; go,—use it well.
Suborn the men, I'll give you means, work hard,
You'll find them easy prey; they grumble much;
The East is yours; then take its wealth, and arm,
And I, and Rome,—the World is yours—O Cassius!

AVIDIUS CASSIUS:

It is against my oath, my heart, my honour.
He is the nobler man. If I should win?
What then? I could not shame to wed you. No,
Let us wait the destined course of Nature.
Marcus will die,—his spirit is too great,—
'Twill break its prison soon.

FAUSTINA:

Spirit! Wind!
The destined course of Nature! Know you not
It lies with every man to make his future?
There is no 'destined course'; 'tis as we will,
'Tis as we plan we live.

AVIDIUS CASSIUS:

Honour forbids.

FAUSTINA:

Then Cassius is a coward?

AVIDIUS CASSIUS:

No! Ye Gods!
Did you not hear him calmly praise these churls,
His brothers in the State? He trusts us all.

A man with nerve to trust in such an Army
Will never be confounded.

FAUSTINA:

Fare you well.
Cassius turns saint; sings prayers, and cantilenies;
Spouts holiness; coddles his little soul
With fine-spun skeins of Right.

AVIDIUS CASSIUS:

I will away;
You 'tice me to my ruin; I refuse.

FAUSTINA:

Dear Cassius, now, will speak with Brother Marcus,
"Noble Marcus, watch your wicked wife,
She plots your early ruin." Fare you well!
Think not to see me more. If *he* should fall,
And Cassius comes to me, I'll say him nay.
I would not lie with such a feeble coward.
I would not mother children for a slave
That would not dare for me.

AVIDIUS CASSIUS:

Hold, scornful Queen!
I go to raise an army in the East.
A little while, and as my wife you'll know me,—
Whether you will or no!

FAUSTINA:

Now Cassius speaks

As well becomes his nature, which is manly.
Not angry with me, Cassius?

AVIDIUS CASSIUS:

Fare you well.

FAUSTINA:

What, Cassius! Leave in wrath?

AVIDIUS CASSIUS:

You torture me!
You mock me, like your husband, but in truth,
I might have known as much, and such a whore
Could never love me truly!

FAUSTINA:

Cassius! Whore?

AVIDIUS CASSIUS:

Ay, evil woman! Whore.

FAUSTINA:

You speak not well.
"Cassius loved a whore; a whore loved Cassius."
It has no pleasant sound. What think you, Sir?
When we are gone, the story shall be told,
"A beauteous Queen once loved a valiant Roman;
She gave her life to him, her name, her *all;*—
The love of one that was esteemed a god
She counted but the service of a slave.
For Love she gave her fame,"—and then, the end;
"Cassius loved a whore; a whore loved him."
Is this, then, all;—The End?

AVIDIUS CASSIUS:

Faustina, peace!

FAUSTINA:

Did they ask me when I was wed to Marcus?
We come into the world, grow up, live long,
In seventy years of dull and tedious life,
We count not quite so many happy hours.
The few we count are but for things of nought,
A smile, a gesture, and the loving touch
Of hands that trembled with divine compassion.
And one such hour is this, when Cassius speaks,
And all the world is Music, and my heart
Leaps to his every glance, each pain-wrought word;
And this now, is the Summary of my Life,
By Cassius,—for whom my book was written,—
"Cassius loved a whore; a whore loved Cassius."
Faustina speaks,—the Empress of the Romans!

AVIDIUS CASSIUS:

Forgive me. I have loved, and drank of gall,
Loved long,—and drank of gall!

FAUSTINA:

My Lord is grieved?
Then I forgive, 'tis sweet! Go, Cassius, go.
Fight, and the World is yours. Rest not a day,
Until you come the great World's Master's Master;
Come back to these fond arms; claim me as yours,
The Prize,—a loving mate.

AVIDIUS CASSIUS :

Farewell. Fear not.
The Fates deal kindly with you !

FAUSTINA :

And with you !

Exeunt.

ACT II.

ACT II.

The Country of the Quadi, South Bohemia and Moravia.

The Tent of MARCUS AURELIUS, on a hill. Soldiers and Officers approach. They are dejected. They stand, and seem to agree to a proposition. One speaks to the Guard; he goes in. Some fall exhausted from thirst.

MARCUS AURELIUS issues from the tent, proudly, and with decision. He swiftly scans the assembly, and looks fiercely on PROTINUS, who acts as Spokesman for the rest.

PROTINUS :

The End is not far off. Now, Emperor,
Retire, and save yourself.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Nay, that I *will* not !
Pluck up your courage, man ! Think of the men !
Show them a fine example !

PROTINUS :

Show us a foe,
And we will fight ! We cannot fight with Nature
We cannot fight with shadows, things unseen.
Retire to water, water !

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Gently, Sir.
Is this my true Protinus? Nay,—he's dead.
You are beside yourself !

PROTINUS :

Aye, rail ! Chide on !
We are beside ourselves; that's very true.
Rebuke comes easy to the favoured ones.
You are not racked in pain.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Sir, you wrong me.
We share alike with water. I am small.
That is why I faint not.

PROTINUS :

Water, Zeus, Water !

(There is a hoarse murmur of approval from the men. Also hostility to MARCUS.)

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Captains, and Men at Arms ! endure a while,
And Victory shall be ours, or, if denied,
Fighting we shall go down, which to be sure
Is not to die, but enter into Life,
That glorious Fame which shall for ever live.

Fear not; Stand fast; quit you like Romans, men!
We burn with thirst; the gods are testing us;
We're sick at heart? Discouraged? Labour on.
Think of the Victories past. When we set forth,
Both friend and foe made jest of us; they mocked;
They scoffed at boys and slaves, and stunted men,
But soon they cried your praises; rouse ye then!
Remember the Marcomanni how ye smote them.
Few escaped; ye fought with royal courage.
That was a test; right gloriously ye passed it.
They were a terrible foe; ye vanquished them.
The gods were pleased, ye patiently endured.
Please them again; Thirst is a terrible foe.
Fight him, hope, endure, for we perceive
The End is not far off. We soon receive
The plaudits of the gods, or their contempt.
Think not your lot is hard; this place forbidding;
Deem not this your misfortune; nobly borne,
It is a great good fortune. Bear it so.
This is the Trumpet Call; this is the Day!
Rejoice! 'Tis but a Game,—and Victory!
Let but this thought urge on your will to conquer;
Then,—doing all we can, and while we can,
Even in the Shadow of the Gate of Death,
We'll gain eternal honour!

(By little and little, the Stage is darkened as by thunderstorm.)

PROTINUS :

Pardon, Sir.
Here upon my knees I pardon beg ;
Do with me what you will. Rebellious thoughts
And bitter thronged my soul. Sir, let it pass.
Remember not my speech.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Get up; get up;
Am I a god that you should kneel to me?
Kneel to the gods, not men. Who loves his soul
Plays not the tragic part, nor groans, nor seeks
Nor flies from Death. Possess your soul; be strong,
Intelligent.

PROTINUS :

Remember not my words,
For we have loved you, Sir, and whom we love.
We oft address not wisely, but we show
The worse part unashamed. Recall the day
When side by side we stood, and panting, faint,
Exhaust in Victory, and let that love
Which filled our trembling limbs redeem us now.
Restore us to your favour.

MARCUS AURELIUS (*looking up*) :

Peace! No more.
I trust the gods have heard us, and will send
That rain we sorely need.

Loud flash of lightning, loud crash of thunder.

PROTINUS :

Zeus be praised !

SOLDIER :

He is a god ! Rain in the Valley,—see !

OTHERS :

Long live our Emperor, Marcus !

PROTINUS :

Gather it.

Haste, and fill your vessels.

Hoarse shout of the soldiery. They stagger off, or crawl as best they can.

MARCUS and PROTINUS are left alone.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

What Protinus? Seek you not for water?

PROTINUS :

You are a god ! No mortal man is with us.
Accept my homage, Lord.

He kneels, and kisses MARCUS' hand.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Up, Protinus.
This is but foolishness. That I'm no god
My thirst is ample witness; for one cup,
One cup of the Clitumnus dancing clear,
I'd give ten thousand talents.

PROTINUS :

MARCUS! LOOK!

He points into the Valley. There is great outcry off stage. Wails of despair. The Romans having left their ground to drink of the puddles, the Quadi are attacking them fiercely, nearly cutting them to pieces.

Forward, Emperor, let us die with them!

MARCUS AURELIUS:

Stay here; they see me, and we are alone.
They think I am a god; and they will fight.

(He lifts up his hands to the heavens.)

O Mighty Zeus! Into Thy Hands we fall;
Uphold us and preserve us!

Lightning. Loud crash of thunder. Yells of encouragement and wonder among the Romans.

PROTINUS:

Saw you it!
The Quadi are confounded! the field is strewn
With Lightning-stricken dead!

Shouts of the Roman Soldiers, off.

Fight on! Fight on!
Marcus fights for us! See, there he stands,
Hurling his bolts of Thunder!

(MARCUS urges on the Soldiers. He points out a weak place.)

Thunder and lightning again. There follows a storm of hail, the stones being so large that the Quadi are compelled to draw off. The storm

ceased, the Romans are recovered and in good order, and they utterly defeat the Quadi.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Zeus be praised !

They rout them.

PROTINUS :

Victory ! Full, complete !

Enter Centurions and Soldiers, bringing water.

SOLDIER :

Hail to the Emperor-god. Marcus Aurelius !

Loud Cheers. The Generals drink.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Well done ye valiant men !

SOLDIER :

You are a god;
We saw you hurl the thunder; not too soon;
I thought my day had come.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

You're wrong, my friend.

SOLDIER :

You pointed with your finger; on the instant,
The lightning mowed them down; we saw it; nay,—
You shall not put us off.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

You err in this;
Give thanks to Zeus, Lord of Heaven and Earth;
Unless you would offend Him, give Him honour;

Bow not to mortal men.

Enter Messenger, hurriedly.

PROTINUS :

Who are you?

Speak or you die!

MESSENGER :

From Rome,—a messenger.

Emperor, Avidius Cassius arms;

He holds the East; the Legions have rebelled;

He means to capture Rome.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Not Cassius!

MESSENGER :

Avidius Cassius, Sir!

MARCUS AURELIUS :

A man!

A General! Protinus,—mark; 'tis Fate.

One peril past, another looms ahead;

The gods ordained this for our spirit's health.

This teaches me that trials should be welcomed;

By them, we find—ourselves.

PROTINUS :

You will not fail.

But look you, fellow, what's the news in Rome?

MESSENGER :

Despair, and consternation.

PROTINUS :

I believe it

MESSENGER :

Return, my Lord,—you have the last conscription.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

And the Best. How now, Protinus? Water?

PROTINUS :

Fire, Sir,—in Rome.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

You must remain.
I'll go. Be strong, Protinus.

PROTINUS :

To the death.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

But make you sure of water.

PROTINUS :

Nay, my lord.
Mock not your faithful servant!

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Mock my friend?

PROTINUS :

Peace, Marcus. Look,—he waits.

MARCUS AURELIUS (*to Messenger*) :

Go, take your rest,
Then get you back to Rome. Report,—I follow.
Bid them be ready to provide me ships
That I may pass to Asia.

MESSENGER :

I obey.

Exit Messenger.

PROTINUS :

Must I attack the Quadi?

MARCUS AURELIUS :

To-morrow.

One swift assault, and I will march for Rome.
Then,—firmly hold this camp.

PROTINUS :

The soldiers shout!

Shouts, and the sounding of a Trumpet.
PROTINUS rushes off.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

An Embassy. Receive it, Labius.

Exit Centurion. Enter PROTINUS.

PROTINUS :

Marcus! Peace at last!

MARCUS AURELIUS :

An Embassy?

PROTINUS :

Take me with you now!

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Calmly, friend.

Enter Centurion, and an Ambassador of the Quadi.

AMBASSADOR :

Hail to Cæsar!

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Greeting, Sir. What would you?

AMBASSADOR :

Terms of Peace.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

What of our slain, good Sir?

AMBASSADOR :

Nay,—what of ours? The men the gods have slain?
I, too, might ask you that; we'd not seek peace
Did not the gods frown on us.

PROTINUS :

Insolent clown!

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Softly, Protinus.
(*To Ambass.*) : Sir, plain speech and just.
The Terms are these;—that you shall keep the peace
Indemnify this portion of our State
For all aggressions lately practised here.
You shall a Treaty sign; become our Ally;
On our behalf, defend from wrong these Borders;
And you must waste no time.

AMBASSADOR (*scowlingly*) :

Surrender, then?

MARCUS AURELIUS :

That,—or annihilation.

AMBASSADOR :

But for the gods,
We'd not accept such terms.

MARCUS AURELIUS:

From that I judge

You *do* accept our terms?

AMBASSADOR:

It seems we must.

MARCUS AURELIUS:

Then waste no time. To-morrow, you shall sign.
If you come not, then bid your tribes beware.
To-morrow, Sir, we'll see you. Fare you well.
Exit Ambassador, humiliated by the coolness of the Emperor.

PROTINUS:

Ha-ha-ha!

MARCUS AURELIUS:

You'll ruin me, Protinus.

PROTINUS:

How he squirmed!
Marcus, Marcus, if I'd an eye like yours
I'd climb my sword as useless!

MARCUS AURELIUS:

Doff your sword?
That brings me back with vengeance! Rome to-morrow,
To-morrow my sermon for. He is no savage.
He's skilled in War; has friends, and princely gifts;
Can rouse a sluggish mob to deeds of Valour,
Yet, lacks the cultured mind. Protinus,—mark,

I stand where part the ways; you spoke aright.
My sword will count for nought with Cassius.
I stand or fall by him; but not with swords.
If I can conquer Cassius, I'll forgive,
And conquer my own self, and that, my friend,
I'll count a Victory.

Exeunt.

ACT III.

ACT III.

Rome. The Royal Tent at the Triumphal Games.

PROTINUS, CONSTANTIUS and DEMETRIUS wait for the Emperor.

CONSTANTIUS :

Well, Protinus, you had a rousing welcome!

PROTINUS :

O, it was glorious!

DEMETRIUS :

You'd cross the Bridge?

PROTINUS :

We did. I was astounded! Wonderful!
Everywhere bright colours; cloudy the sky,
With nimbus hanging down upon the Hills,
Blue in the awful distance; O Ye Gods!
The World was turned to Heaven! As I rode,
Full on a near-by statue shone the sun,
And, happy omen too! it lighted up
A swift-winged Victory, new-lighted from the clouds.

She hovered in the act to crown the Brave,
O Crown of Glory blest! Her face was fair,
Lit with a lovely smile; her slender arms,
Her lightly poised Wings seemed not of Earth,
So delicate they were, instinct with Life!
Her tender bosom, veiled in drapery,
Passions of Love engendered, for it seemed
So beautifully pure, sublime, divine!
My honoured friends, the scene was so inspiring,
That when I thought of them that had been slain,
I could not choose but rouse me, for I felt
My soul take wings,—and fly!

CONSTANTIUS:

Marcus is great.
Brave Cassius is beaten; well for him.
Faustina must be proud.

PROTINUS:

Faustina,—proud?
I rode behind her chariot; she seemed sad;
I saw her bosom swell, as I have seen
Some lovely steed, in battle, heave his sides,
With long and shuddering moans; a horrid sight!
As if her lungs would burst with grief or rage.
And I was told she shed a flood of tears
On reaching Marcus' Palace.

CONSTANTIUS:

Ho? Indeed?

PROTINUS:

Haha! Faustina, proud!

DEMETRIUS :

Some weep for joy, my friend.

PROTINUS :

And some for grief and shame. She was not proud,
But wrung with fear and anguish.

CONSTANTIUS :

Why?

PROTINUS :

Sst! Yes
Marcus!—The Senate meets at nine.

Enter MARCUS AURELIUS, looking worried.

My Lord!
How fares our dear Master?

No answer. MARCUS unseeing.

Fiends! Ho! Cæsar!

MARCUS stops suddenly, looking up.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Protinus? Gentlemen! Good morning, Sirs.
What would you have with me?

PROTINUS :

You told us, Sir,
To meet you here. Accordingly, we came
To take you on your journey.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Yes,—of course.

PROTINUS :

Lord, pardon my presumption, but I think
You've need of counsellors. Relieve your soul.
When we were sorely pressed, and strong ones doubted,
Your brow was clear, and careless; now, in ease,
You wear the mask of Sorrow.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Mask of Sorrow?

PROTINUS :

Sir, you frown.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Friend.—I con my writings.

PROTINUS :

Why do you write, my lord? It steals your time;
And that, you say, is precious.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Why do I write?
Because I am a fool; I covet honour,
A crown of Glory as a Man of Letters,
And I shall perish miserably, nought done:
A few insipid pages,—and oblivion—
And still the World will wag, and still the Art
Of greater men will laugh to scorn my labours.
I advertise my shame, and emptiness;
I make myself a laughing stock,—for what?
To prove if haply I may win a Name;
A marble monument inscribed with thoughts

Of my own coinage; if I succeed,
Effeminates, women, boys and bookworms,—
toads
Will gush upon my grave, and say with awe,
" Here lies a splendid genius, plucked ere ripe;
Who knows what Beauty might have been
revealed
Had he but lived yet longer?" If I fail,
My guerdon is a sneer contemptuous
From the professionals,—the coterie.
To wind up this discussion, draw the moral,—
Ambitions are of Fools.

CONSTANTIUS :

You're sick of mind,
And voice the Artist's humour.

PROTINUS :

Yet, my lord,
I would you'd speak the truth.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

How so,—the truth?

PROTINUS :

Emperor,—let Marcus rail at Life,
Ay,—if he likes,—vent his disgust in plaints
Like any feeble poet,—but my lord,—
Expect not we believe such sorry stuff,
Your counsellors know better.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

What do you mean?

PROTINUS :

Will you not trust us, Sir? You are alone
In awful majesty,—you live, eat, sleep,—alone.
How, therefore, can you rightly judge the pulse
Of this chameleon World? O, let us help you!
Tell us your trouble,—for, my honoured lord,
This clumsy feint will not pass current here.
Our Master cares not twopence for his Fame,—
At least,—that kind of Fame.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

You're shrewd, Protinus.

PROTINUS :

You said it; I did not.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Come, speak your mind.

PROTINUS :

The Empress,—she is pleased with your success.
At least,—I'd like to think so.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

So would I.
You noticed, then?

PROTINUS :

Aye, my lord,—I noticed.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

I take no shame to say,—' I love my wife.'
When I see her, her not alone I see,
But something more behind,—a lovely spirit;—
That owns not my dominion,—that flies from me,
Eludes me, mocks me, hates me!

PROTINUS :

Sir, I judge
You know the reason why?

MARCUS AURELIUS :

By Mars, I don't!
Except it is because I am alive.

PROTINUS :

Very likely.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

What!

PROTINUS :

Sir,—be not offended.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

You're sharp to-day, Protinus, but you're right.
If I were dead, then were Faustina happy.
It is,—my medicine,—'tis given me
Lest I should grow too happy,—and subscribe
To what the foolish think,—that I'm a god.

PROTINUS :

Surely, Sir, you know?

MARCUS AURELIUS :

The reason? No.

PROTINUS :

Sir,—Cassius is handsome.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Cassius!

PROTINUS :

Eloquent,—well-pleasing.

MARCUS AURELIUS:

—That is true.

PROTINUS:

He worshipped your Faustina?

MARCUS AURELIUS:

Who would not?

PROTINUS:

All see not with your eyes, but Emperor,
You do not *seem* to love her; you are cold,
Wrapped in abstruse reflections, work, and cares.
"Who would be loved, must love"; she seeing him,
Transfigured by his love and reverence,
Has loved where she seemed loved, and therefore, Sir,
Your Victory is her loss; your health her sickness,
Since Cassius must fight.

MARCUS AURELIUS:

Too plain, too plain.

PROTINUS:

Sir, pardon me my freedom; now you know
Where danger threatens you.

MARCUS AURELIUS:

Would I did not!
I pray ye, leave me now. I'll follow ye.
I'd think what this portends.

PROTINUS, etc.

Farewell, my lord.

Exeunt Counsellors.

MARCUS AURELIUS:

There is no Death, but Doubt; hope on; hope on.
Only the fearful fall into the pit
Of their own wretched fears; leap up; leap up.
Though we were dead, yet shall we live immortal;
The slights, the jars, the terrors of this World
Are but the tools that shape the Perfect Soul.
Have faith, and murmur not; but,—is she gone?
The mother of my son? Say, 'tis the best,—
For otherwise to think's impiety,
Ungratefulness to Zeus; 'tis the best.

Enter FAUSTINA, and Attendants.

She comes,—a beauty ever.
Welcome, Queen,—
They wait for us, time presses.

FAUSTINA:

I am ready.

MARCUS AURELIUS:

You are not well, I think. Love, why not rest?
Stay, if you would rather.

FAUSTINA:

I would rather.

MARCUS AURELIUS:

Stay then. I'll explain.

FAUSTINA :

O Marcus, please!
How fares your expedition?

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Well, my dear.

FAUSTINA :

Your armies come to time? The ships as well?

MARCUS AURELIUS :

The plans work well; all's well.

FAUSTINA :

You take me with you?

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Yes, Faustina.

FAUSTINA :

Marcus,—if you win,
What will you do to Cassius?

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Punish him.

FAUSTINA :

Yes, punish him,—but how?

MARCUS AURELIUS :

As justice rules;—
According to my honour,—and his crime.

FAUSTINA :

Both these are great, as common men report.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

And to one else?

FAUSTINA :

Yes,—Others too.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

I'm glad.

FAUSTINA :

Cassius said so too; how fares he now?
Is he strong? Has he ample forces?

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Ample,—but unstable, for I hear
The Legions rue their folly, and would fain
Return to their allegiance.

FAUSTINA :

You are strong.
Your soldiers worship you. You will defeat him.
Cassius said so too.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

As the gods will,—
I know not.

FAUSTINA :

As the gods will?—they will. O Zeus!

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Be not sad, Faustina.

FAUSTINA :

Marcus, I'm afraid.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Of what, my Queen?

FAUSTINA :

Of Life—this fleeting breath—

Last night, I lay awake upon my couch,
A prey to spectral terrors; all at once,
I heard the wind wail sadly; then he went
His everlasting way; it haunted me,
It seemed as if he called me, and I soon
Should follow, follow, follow!

MARCUS AURELIUS:

Be not sad.
We have a Hope there's joy to come hereafter.
Call to your mind the fairest place you've dwelt in;
The glory of the sky, the sea, the earth;
Think of the lovely creatures you have known;
Remember Zeus made them,—can make better;
His House is sweeter far than earthly Mansions,
And filled with Music, such as you never heard.
And if there be no gods,—why,—it is well.
We shall have ceased from pain.

FAUSTINA:

Cold comfort, cold.
But promise, Marcus, if he fall before you,
Promise to have mercy.

MARCUS AURELIUS:

Why, my love?

FAUSTINA:

Promise, Marcus, promise.

MARCUS AURELIUS:

Said I not
"According to my honour, and his crime?"

FAUSTINA :

ou fence me off. O Marcus, on my knees
beg you to have mercy !

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Punishment,
ccording to his crime.

FAUSTINA :

And what is that?

MARCUS AURELIUS :

orgive him all, Faustina.

FAUSTINA :

All? All?

MARCUS AURELIUS :

orgive him all,—and leave him.

FAUSTINA :

Oh ! You mock me !
ou plan a cruel vengeance; deal with mercy.
ranted I've sinned; and I confess I've sinned;
et deal in mercy; think of my remorse,
nd punish me,—not him !

MARCUS AURELIUS :

As I have said,—
o judgment shall be given.

FAUSTINA :

Honestly?

MARCUS AURELIUS :

eus be my witness.

FAUSTINA:

Marcus,—why?

MARCUS AURELIUS:

Because I would be master of myself.
Now stir in me great longings; I've a mood
To be a manly Roman. I forgive.
Therefore, dwell in peace.

Enter PROTINUS, CONSTANTIUS and DEMETRIUS, with servant bearing something in his hand covered with a cloak.

What would you have with me?

PROTINUS:

Your pardon, lord.
We met this slave, who told us tuneful tidings.
He brings you Cassius' head.

MARCUS AURELIUS:

What!

[The Slave uncovers Head of CASSIUS. FAUSTINA shrieks.

Away!
Take the thing hence! Away!

FAUSTINA:

You fiend of Hell!
You mock'd me!

MARCUS AURELIUS:

I did not! Of this, I'm clean!

Take it away, and bury it. You, my lords,
See it is done with honour.

FAUSTINA :

Die, you fiend !

(*FAUSTINA rushes upon MARCUS with a dagger. She is intercepted by PROTINUS and CONSTANTIUS, who twist the knife out of her hand, pulling her back, raging and hysterical. MARCUS stands by calmly.*)

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Take it away. Take the foul thing hence !
Who has done this deed?

SLAVE :

His soldiers, Sir.
They mutinied and killed him; and the men,
If you will grant safe-conduct, will explain
Why they rebelled against you, for they hope,
Your enemy being dead, you will reward them;
They laid this charge upon me.

FAUSTINA :

Wretch ! You lie !
You have been paid to say it. I am mocked !
But Emperor, take my curse; may evil dog you,
Ruin, Pain, Misfortune to the end,
Poison your life, your mind, and at the last,
Hound you to shameful death !

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Slave ! Get you hence !

Tell the murderers I refuse to see them.
I hate this evil deed. Come here no more.
And warn the men that sent you.

FAUSTINA:

Fellow, stay.
Is it true that Cassius' soldiers killed him?
Had Cæsar ought in this?

SLAVE:

Nothing, madam.
I saw them do it, I.

FAUSTINA:

And gladly, eh?

SLAVE:

Why should I, madam? He was a generous master.

MARCUS AURELIUS:

Enough,—begone! and your disgusting burden.
O, bury it with decency, Protinus,
As fits a Roman General!

Exeunt PROTINUS, CONSTANTIUS, DEMETRIUS, and SLAVE.

Satisfied?
I loathe this horrid act.

FAUSTINA:

'Twas Cassius.
No mistake.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Think not that I rejoice,
I meant in very truth that which I said,
That he should be forgiven.

FAUSTINA :

It is well.
Cassius is dead,—is dead !

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Faustina, hear.
I grieve for him, and you. Believe me, love !

FAUSTINA :

I pray you, Marcus,—leave me.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Be not sad.

FAUSTINA :

I feel an ageing woman; nothing lives;
The Years are passing on, and still my place
Seems but to be a plaything to the gods,
For mockery,—contempt !

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Lie down, love, sleep.

FAUSTINA :

No matter, Sir. And some, 'tis said, and some,—
That sleep i' the dust shall wake, shall wake to gladness,
To everlasting Life,—and some—contempt;
And they that were wise shall shine like stars in heaven,

For ever and for ever. Well, — no matter.
Since Cassius is dead.

MARCUS AURELIUS:

Faustina, peace!

FAUSTINA:

I murdered him! I murdered Cassius!

MARCUS AURELIUS:

'Tis as the gods ordained.

FAUSTINA:

The gods? Where's Zeus?
What cares the Eternal? Tell me. What cares He?
Shame sits on all my purple; 'tis defiled!
I am a wretch that is ashamed to live,—
But Marcus! *If I die!*

MARCUS AURELIUS:

Sweet. Comfort you!
Take to your aid — Philosophy — and live.

FAUSTINA:

Philosophy? What comfort! Gloze me words;
Soothe my mad brain with sweetened honey-words.
Words, words, words, — and that is all!
Men's comfort is in words, — and men are fools!

MARCUS AURELIUS:

I love you still; love me.

FAUSTINA:

You are not Cassius.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

My love is not a lust; it is a love
That fondly thinks of you, a state of mind
That knows no jealous hate; it is a love
Like that we bear to stars, young girls, and children.
We love them for their beauty, but we grieve not
If we possess them not. In them we see
Great Zeus' lovely Image, and their love
We ask not in return; it comes,—perhaps.

FAUSTINA :

My heart is gone; translated; Fare you well!

MARCUS AURELIUS :

As you will. Farewell!

FAUSTINA goes off as in a trance.

MARCUS watches, features working. She gone, he turns, and passes out after halting once, to look round after his wife.

ACT IV.

ACT IV.

A Palace in Asia.

PROTINUS, CONSTANTIUS and DEMETRIUS wait for the EMPEROR.

PROTINUS :

I am ashamed of you, Demetrius !
O fie ! Constantius,—as we turned the corner,
I saw him looking kindly on a girl,
And smiling like a boy.

DEMETRIUS :

O peace, you madcap !

CONSTANTIUS :

A Counsellor ! A Soldier ! O Demetrius !

DEMETRIUS :

Guilty, my Lords ! I'm guilty. Let me tell you.
How that sweet girl adorns my quiet way !
I know her not, even her name I know not;
Day after day we pass, we give a greeting;
She swiftly smiles; her eyes laugh out her pleasure.

So we pass, and all the livelong day,
I feel I have a friend, and labour on,
The better for her greeting. That my Lords,
Is all my crime,—I'm guilty.

PROTINUS :

Shame, you sluggard!
Will you not woo her, man?

DEMETRIUS :

I would I could!
But she is young; too young for me to woo her.
My Bride is—Letters—now.

CONSTANTIUS :

That will not do.
You smile upon a girl, and pass on,—cold,
Elegant as your Greek, you vain deceiver!
You coward! This is sloth.

DEMETRIUS :

Perhaps it is.

CONSTANTIUS :

I'm sure it is.

DEMETRIUS :

But who shall know, my Lords,
What joy and comfort's in a graceful action?
What pleasure warms the heart of some poor traveller
Who sees a kindly smile; what strength returns,
When, bowed with many griefs, he in some eye,
Perceives a sister's love?

PROTINUS :

A sister's love !

Phew ! ' Sister's love ' is good !

CONSTANTIUS :

Demetrius !

You libertine ! I know you. Now, my lord,
You seek to gloze it off, speak trippingly,
And fatherly,—of Love.

DEMETRIUS :

To tell the truth,

There's something in that girl I do admire.
Not two in all the World have such a smile,—
I wish I knew that girl.

PROTINUS :

A sister's love !

O, for a sister's love !

DEMETRIUS :

I tell you, Sirs,—

I—sst—the Emperor—

Enter MARCUS AURELIUS, reading a book.

DEMETRIUS, PROTINUS, CONSTANTIUS :

Hail, Cæsar ! Hail !

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Good morning, Sirs.
We were to talk, I think, about these Christians?

DEMETRIUS :

That was the question, Sir.

MARCUS AURELIUS:

I like them not,
They hold a base religion, 'tis degrading,
A danger to the State. They will confound
The whole wide World in ruin with this new thing!
Confound our Empire; teach men insolence,
To mock our gods, our cloud-enthronèd gods!
They desecrate the Seven Hills of Rome!
Liken our Sacred Land to painted whores!
The Sacrilege! And yet,—I must be patient,—
And keep my harmony.

DEMETRIUS:

Despite the fools,
I think their Founder was a gifted man.

MARCUS AURELIUS:

I would I had his faith! I need it now!
Something is breaking, friends: my Building falls.

(*Passionately*)

Who is this man that says he is the way?
A carpenter, and born of mortal woman!
By all accounts, not in the true descent,
Worse bred than you and I. Great Zeus' Son!
Is it not blasphemy? The Way? The Truth?
The Life? What follow's this, that speaks of Zeus
As he were in his bosom, nay,—was made,
His joyous Mercury!

DEMETRIUS :

I know not, Sir.
But this we must concede;—he paid the price.
He was a sweet Philosopher, and more,
He practised what he preached. It is a jibe,
Old as the Hills, but true, of many men;—
"They deal in words of Wisdom, not the Works."
He ran the course,—to die.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Groping for Light,
As I! O Truth! Where are you now? To die!
To sink back to the elements, and blow
For evermore by hopeless, barren shores!
What is the End, O Zeus! Why do we live,
If at the last we sink but into dust!
Where then, our boasted Glory! O Protinus!

PROTINUS :

What, Marcus! Marcus! Water, friends, he faints!

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Not water now, Protinus, only dust!

PROTINUS :

Sweet Marcus! What's amiss?

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Faustina—gone!
She's dying.

PROTINUS :

Dying!

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Ay, Protinus.

PROTINUS :

Nay !

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Defeat, and still defeat ! For life we work,
And all our schemes go wrong. I loved her, friends,
I'd hoped, by her, to found a Race of Kings.
And now,—my son, her child ! my only joy,
Runs headlong to the Pit, with Rome behind !
I'm breaking, breaking,—'tis a hopeless task !
From end to end of this fond Empire
I stagger with my Armies,—and for what?
As soon as one foe falls, another stands.
Zeus has cursed the State ! Death ! Famine ! Plague !
Defeat, and still defeat !

PROTINUS :

O Marcus ! Come !
Our never-daunted General, still victorious,
Not crying out " Defeat?"

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Defeat, Protinus.
Cassius wins, for all I was his Master.
This is a tangled World !

CONSTANTIUS :

Nay, nay, my Lord.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

She loved him, Sir,—not lightly.

DEMETRIUS :

He being dead,
Your fortune may be better.

MARCUS AURELIUS :

Listen, friends.
Last night, I went to see her;—sadly looked
Upon her staring face. No sign of joy;
No word of recognition; not a sign
She knew me as her husband. When I spoke,
The brilliant eyes looked up in vivid hope,
And fell, when they saw me, back to a bust,
That noble head of Cassius; I was hurt.
Methought I heard an air so sweet and sad,
And as I stood upon a mountain-side,
Alone for evermore, so stood I then,
Pierced in heart, and brain, yet sensitive,
Alive to every terror, crushed in spirit.
It seemed no friend might ever speak to me,
No gentle smile rejoice my lonely way;
The Universe itself moaned as in pain,
And Ages passed me by.

PROTINUS :

O Marcus! Come!

MARCUS AURELIUS :

I came too late, Protinus; had I come

But three days in advance, I might have saved
him.
Won his love, and led him back to Honour,
For, I deem, he was a man misled.
Faustina then had lived, and I had seen her,
Fugitive and shyly, gently smile,
Smile that brilliant smile, and sing for joy
To see the wondrous work.
But;—Fare ye well!
I will go read awhile.

PROTINUS:

But Marcus! Marcus!

Exit MARCUS AURELIUS.

The Fiends! Constantius! eh! For Cassius!

CONSTANTIUS:

He's deeply moved, Protinus.

PROTINUS:

Deeply moved!
Ye gods! His reason's reeking!

DEMETRIUS:

Well it might.
A hero oft, it seems, acts like a coward,
But from a different reason.

PROTINUS:

What? The devil!
How noble is this Roman! Of such stuff
Earth's Gentlemen are made, her fairest flowers.
They live and reign for ever. Not for a Race,

But for a World they're made; not for an Age,
But for Eternity. He'll have his wish!
He'll found a Race of Kings; Faustina's death
Shall quicken a new birth in human hearts.
This misplaced love shall but enhance the true.
O, if a love, sin-stained, can be so fair,
Plead so, and be so faithful, what delight,
What Heaven of Heavens is theirs who love
indeed,
As Marcus did, and does!

CONSTANTIUS:

'Tis wonderful!
Alone, but not alone!

PROTINUS:

Alone? Not he!
But 'tis an awful hour! Let's comfort him.
Death waits for all, for Kingdoms as for Men,
He must not grieve; 'tis he alone can lead us;
He fires our minds; inspires the doubting soul;
Quickens the very dead by eloquence!
But what needs he of mortals' company?
Ten thousand years shall pass, and not a man
Come nigh his sweet perfection he's—a *man!*
Exquisite in the making; true,—like us
In lower attributes, but those above
Are his, are his alone. Show me a King,
A Scholar, Artist, Prophet, Leader of Men,
Each noted in his sphere, and Antoninus
Shall not be made ashamed. He speaks to all,

A Healing Influence in a maddened World.
O Rome will never die while Marcus lives;
Nor will she die if we but follow him!
What fairer scroll can grace a mortal's tomb
Than this:—"*I do my duty.*" Hear, O Zeus!
Imprint my Marcus' words in every heart!
"*I do my duty; other things trouble me not.*"

THE END.

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